



X-Plain™

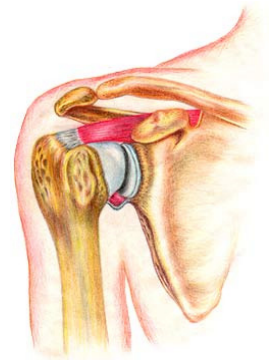
Shoulder Arthroscopy

Reference Summary

Over the last few years shoulder injuries have become more common because people are exercising more frequently.

Diagnosing and treating these injuries may involve a simple surgery to look at the inside of the shoulder joint.

If your doctor recommends shoulder arthroscopy, the decision whether or not to have surgery is also yours. This reference summary will help you understand better the benefits and risks of this surgery.



Anatomy

The shoulder joint joins the upper body to the arm.

The bones involved in this joint are the following:

- The scapula, or shoulder blade bone,
- And the humerus, the upper arm bone.

These bones are covered by special tissue called cartilage. The smooth surfaces of the cartilage allow for smooth, painless movement at the shoulder joint.

Ligaments connect the bones and help stabilize the shoulder.

Symptoms And Their Causes

Arthritis, or inflammation of the joint, causes the surfaces of the joint to become rough.

Injury to the shoulder can cause cartilage tears.

The ligaments may also rupture.

Any of these conditions can cause severe shoulder pain.

The pain may make the person unable to use the arm.

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Alternative Treatments

Patients may try medications such as aspirin or ibuprofen to decrease the inflammation in the shoulder. Physical therapy and occupational therapy may also help keep the joint as mobile as possible.

Physical Therapy can also strengthen muscles to prevent further injury.

Injections of steroids in the shoulder joint may relieve symptoms.

If the pain becomes disabling and does not respond to other treatments, shoulder arthroscopy may be considered.

Surgical Treatment

The operation allows the surgeon to look inside the joint and determine the exact problem.

It allows the surgeon to do some types of surgery. For example, the surgeon may be able to shave off a part of a cartilage that is loose and causing lots of pain.

The operation is done through a few small incisions in the shoulder area.

The scopes needed to look and work inside the shoulder are inserted through these incisions.

These scopes allow the doctor to inspect the joint and take care of some of the problems found during the inspection.

At the end of the operation, the small incisions are closed and the patient usually goes home the same day.

Risks And Complications

This operation is very safe. There are, however, several possible risks and complications which are very unlikely but possible.

You need to know about them just in case they happen. By being informed you may be able to help your doctor detect complications early.

The risks and complications include those related to anesthesia and those related to any type of surgery.



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Risks of general anesthesia include nausea, vomiting, urinary retention, cut lips, chipped teeth, sore throat, and headache. More serious risks of general anesthesia include heart attacks, strokes, and pneumonia.

Your anesthesiologist will discuss these risks with you and ask you if you are allergic to certain medications.

Blood clots in the legs can occur due to inactivity during and after the surgery. These usually show up a few days after surgery. They cause the leg to swell and hurt.

Blood clots can become dislodged from the leg and go to the lungs where they will cause shortness of breath, chest pain and possibly death. It is extremely important to let your doctors know if any of these symptoms occur. Sometimes the shortness of breath can happen without warning.

Getting out of bed shortly after surgery may help decrease the risks of this complication.

Some of the risks are seen in any type of surgery. These include the following:

- Infection, deep or at the skin level.
- Bleeding, either during or after the operation.
- Skin scars that may be painful or ugly.

Other risks and complications are related specifically to this surgery. These again are very rare. However, it is important to know about them.

Organs around the shoulder area and close to the surgery may be injured. However, these injuries rarely occur.

Arteries and veins going to the arm may be injured.

Nerves going to the arm may also be injured, with arm weakness or decreased sensation.

The pain may not be relieved by the operation. It may even be worse than before surgery. However, this occurs rarely.

After The Surgery

Most patients go home the same day as the operation.

You may also be given a sling to use for a short period after the operation.

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Physical and occupational therapy may be necessary after the operation to rehabilitate your shoulder.

Summary

Damage to the shoulder can happen in the bones, the cartilage, or the ligaments.

For certain kinds of damage, arthroscopy can be a way to find out what kind of damage has been done and to repair some kinds of problems.

Arthroscopic shoulder surgery is very successful in helping decrease your pain and improve your quality of life.

This operation is very safe with good results. However, as you have learned, complications may happen. Knowing about them will help you detect them early if they happen.

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